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ABSTRACT

A historical overview and analysis of the decentralization process in Victoria, Australia, is the purpose of this paper. The case study illustrates the impact of conflict between political and administrative agendas on attempts to implement the government-initiated policy decision. The current two-tiered system is composed of central and local district administrative levels with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. The modification of the decentralization implementation process illustrates the importance of creating public awareness and involvement for successful policy implementation. (LMI)

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IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISMS FOR FACILITATING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL MANAGEMENT IN VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA: AN OVERVIEW CASE STUDY

BY
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BACKGROUND

The provision of primary and secondary education in Australia is the responsibility of each state. The federal government makes an annual grant from taxation revenue calculated according to an agreed formula which assists each state government to undertake its constitutional responsibilities. Each state sets its own priorities for spending by the various Ministries, and supplements its budget by certain revenue producing prerogatives.

In each state a non-government sector of education complements the formal government provision which is "free, secular and compulsory". These schools are usually religious in nature, those belonging to the Roman Catholic faith predominating. In the late 1960s state aid to non-government schools commenced in a relatively minor way, but with political competition for votes, this assistance has increased markedly. Non-government schools receive grants from both the federal and state governments according to their "wealth status". Thus Catholic schools in poor parishes may now receive up to 90% of their total operational costs from state aid. This case study, however, will concern itself with the government school sector in the State of Victoria.

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Government schools are fully funded, receiving operational grants and competing for a priority in regional level budgets for such matters as buildings. Payment of salaries is a central level responsibility. Equipment and supplies, either additional or replacement, are provided in accordance with central or regional policy. Considerable scope exists for communities to assist schools in various ways, including fund raising where a school council has identified needs which cannot be met within the state's provision.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

History has played a dominant role in the type of educational system which has developed. Australia, a vast land, is sparsely settled so, from early times, it was obvious that the state should take responsibility for ensuring that all children had the opportunity to receive schooling. Thus since 1872, by Act of Parliament, education in Victoria, has been "free, compulsory and secular." The centralized system of education which gradually developed did not undergo major change for a century.

School Committees and Councils

Throughout Victoria all schools had School Councils (post-primary) and School Committees (primary). Membership of these bodies was by elected representatives, usually parents, supplemented by co-opted members on the secondary school councils. The duties of these officially recognized bodies were essentially supportive -- fund raising, maintenance of grounds

and buildings, attending to the welfare needs of teachers, and a range of minor supervisory functions which were seldom, if ever carried out.

In the 1960s and 1970s, wise heads of secondary schools, involved the expertise of these bodies in meaningful sub-committee work particularly related to budgetary matters, e.g., utilization of grants, establishing priorities and means of funding for school equipment, and supervising minor works and maintenance contracts. Technical school principals, under venturesome Directors of Technical Education involved key community personnel more widely in such matters as control of the school's operating expenses, employment of certain ancilliary staff, development of specialist curriculum in accordance with the needs of the community, developing financially viable curricular adjuncts such as farmlets, and schoolground beautification schemes.

During the 1970s especially, matching grants became available for schools and communities to cooperate in the financing and development, on school property, of such expensive items as multipurpose community halls, sporting facilities. The total school plant was considered to be a community resource to be used accordingly under conditions stipulated by the the school council.

Teacher Unions and Parent Associations

In the 1960s also the teacher unions were beginning to gather strength and flex their industrial muscle, none more than

the Victorian Secondary Teachers Association. Having achieved success along with other unions in matters related to salaries and conditions, they turned their attention to other areas, formerly the prerogatives of the system, or the principal. Among the initial gains was the elimination of procedures which allowed unqualified teachers to be employed. Thence activity was centred on control of entry to the teaching service; teacher professionalism and the rejection of the role of inspector; and esablishing alternative policy stances, often counter to official policy, for implementation in schools, e.g., class sizes, teaching hours per week, extra classes to be taken for absent colleagues, correction days, school excursions. Gathering strength also in the 1970s through state wide associations, were the formal school councils and committees, and the semi-formal parents' clubs. All began at various times to seek participation in the administrative and decision-making processes both related to, and within the schools. Their manner of influence was, either by direct action (teachers), or political pressure.

The Education Department and the Beginnings of Delegation

By 1972 a Director-General of Education headed the Education Department which operated through five directorates: Primary, Secondary, Technical, Teacher Education and Special Education. It was controlled from the centre through a system of Inspectors of Schools who reported annually on both schools and teachers.

In the late sixties two glimmers of a decentralizing process occurred. The Director of Secondary Education challenged

secondary schools to rewrite, reorganize and otherwise seek to make relevant, the curriculum offered during the first four years of high schools. Many principals and teachers took advantage of this challenge to write integrated curricula, undertake team teaching, reorganize the time table etc. The Director of Primary Education asked the principals of the larger schools to write a succinct policy statement for their schools, a policy which would have much in common with policies of other schools, but which would enable the principals and their staff to begin thinking about elements of uniqueness in the way individual schools operated. It must be recalled that, generally speaking, teachers have a large measure of autonomy once they close the classroom door. The challenge was to encourage that autonomy in positive ways, to encourage innovation, to foster implementation of new curricula, to facilitate discussion and sharing, and to try out alternative modes of classroom organization and school structuring, e.g., multi-age grouping, team teaching, open classroom techniques. Again it was the wise head of school who led his staff with openness and encouraged their ideas to be expressed in order to take advantage of this new freedom.

FIFTEEN YEARS OF CHANGE

Regionalization Policy Implemented

In 1972, as a matter of government policy, a major move towards administrative decentralization began with a pilot project in regionalization being implemented. It could be viewed in part as a response to the rapidity with which expansion had

occurred throughout the system, to the varying levels of turmoil within the teaching service, and to pressures becoming evident from the better organized parent/community groups associated with schools.

Pilot Project Points the Way. The pilot project in decentralization saw three directors of senior status appointed in late 1971 to three large geographical areas. Their functions were not specified, but from a conveniently located office, situated in the appropriate provincial city, each had the task of "beating the bounds". They were then to report to the Minister upon the acceptability and feasibility of regionalization, about the potential functions of the decentralized offices of education, and the machinery by which the process could be commenced. The ultimate purpose at this stage of thinking was to have administrative decisions made closer to their point of implementation.

The three directors, working closely with each other, combined the activities of discussing regionalization with personnel ranging from directors of divisons through to parents, with demands for administrative actions from principals, teachers and parents. The growth of their leadership presence also saw them commence or develop educational activities which had "slipped through the cracks" of the tightly knit and somewhat defensive divisional system.

The three directors found themselves in great demand by schools and communities for advice and assistance with problem

solving because, for the first time, a senior departmental official was readily accessible and well known to them. They were able to establish adult education centres and teachers centres, expand opportunities for inservice training, and to engage schools and communities in various cooperative ventures which were impossible for remote, anonymous central personnel to accomplish. Critical at all times, and with all levels of personnel, were the creation of good will and the development of good public relations. Thus a groundswell of support from public and teachers began to manifest itself.

Before the end of their first year of activity, the regional directors reported to the Minister in favourable terms on the potential for decentralization, and their recommendations were accepted. An unstated thread which ran through the report indicated the need for a fundamental restructure of the system with divisional structures giving way to a functional structure. Within three years of the pilot project's commencement the potential for decentralization through regionalization began to be operationalized with the state being divided into eleven regions, eight additional directors appointed, and the phasing in of functions commenced.

Operationalization Begins. The first function to be operationalized was that of buildings, grounds and maintenance. After sensitive negotiations with Public Works Department personnel, the wisdom of appointing one of their officers to each

region was accepted. Thus the regional directors began to establish regional programs and priorities for new buildings, substantial additions, refurbishing, major maintenance, cyclical maintenance, and portable classroom needs. Participative mechanisms were established through representative sub-regional groups, based on the primary inspectorates, to develop the final regional programs. The regional programs were then integrated at central level to form a state-wide program after administrative and political processes had been implemented. Full responsibility for the building program, based upon a regional budget, was still far in the future. Where a new school was to be built, or an old one replaced, or substantial renovations and additions carried-out, the local community, through revised school council mechanisms assisted in writing the building brief which formed the basis upon which the Public Works Department designed the building. The public works officer, seconded to the regional education office, provided the practical advice necessary for these efforts to be successful.

Significant matters in the field of teacher education were devolved to the regional office, with an officer appointed to assist with such matters as studentships at Teachers Colleges, and the implementation of inservice education programs. The latter were funded through a budget allocation direct to the regional office, and developed by teacher-organizers according to needs identified at the point of implementation.

School Councils Restructured and Powers Extended

First Stage. Shortly after full regionalization of the state occurred in June 1974 the Minister, as the result of positive and often controversial responses to a discussion paper circulated by the Director-General of Education for local debate, decided to allow all school communities to choose the form of school council they desired, from four alternatives. The essential purpose of this move was to provide opportunities for broadening the membership base of councils to include elected parents, teachers, and where appropriate, students.

The four optional forms for the proposed Advisory Councils were:

A. Status quo.

B. Elected parents, elected teachers, co-opted members of the community and where appropriate, elected students (17 in total).

C. Not more than 17 members, appointed for three years, comprising five elected parents and others nominated to represent local interests and aspirations. The latter could include students where appropriate.

D. Any combination of membership which is agreed by the School Council, principal and staff, parents and members of the community.

Thus in 1975 the Education (Schools Council) Act was enacted to reform the composition and construction of school councils. Through this structural change an official attempt was made to achieve a redistribution of power between the principal and

members of the local community as represented by the school council. With this move the powers of school councils, as statutory bodies, were extended to include such matters as: entering into contractual arrangements for school maintenance and improvements, and with municipal authorities concerning the joint use of school facilities; administering and being accountable for grants made available to the council; exercising supervision over school grounds and buildings; employing ancilliary staff; developing as general advice to principal and staff, a general educational policy for the school. Heads of schools were directed to seek advice on a wide range of policy matters from their school councils. They were made more accountable to members of the council for the spending of a wider range of funds.

Second Stage. With a change in government in the early 80s the new Minister of Education announced a further stage in the development of school councils, establishing the proportion of membership to be held by elected parents and students, and limiting the number of staff representatives. The school council also became a statutory authority, to be seen as the body which finally represents the school. It would be the forum where information concerning the whole school is exchanged, and where local decisions, including decisions on educational policy made within the overall framework of state education, are determined. An overall framework for all school councils was established, within which a review of school council membership

structures was conducted throughout the state. At each school a recommendation for membership was sought which included and had the agreement of parents and staff in all schools, and of student groups in post primary schools. This mix of interest group membership was seen to be important because decisions to be taken by the council would affect the school as a whole. Thus a further amendment to the Education Act was made in 1983.

The framework for school council membership was:

(a) Parents including representatives of parents' clubs, shall constitute no less than half of a primary school council, and no less than one third of a post-primary school council.

(b) Staff shall constitute no more than half of a primary school council, and no more than one third of a post-primary school council. (Members of staff with children at the school at which they teach shall only be eligible for election through this category).

(c) There shall be adequate Student representation in post-primary schools in relation to school size and structure, with the minimum number being two.

(d) Up to one-fifth of the total membership may be Co-opted by the elected council to represent wider community interests.

(e) The Principal shall be a voting member of the council and, for the purposes of co-option, shall be considered as an elected member.

With regard to duties and responsibilities, the general education policy of the school was, within broad state guidelines, to be determined by the school council. In essence, this meant that the school was accountable for its performance to its community through the school council. Thus many schools implemented their own review procedures, a form of which had already been officially encouraged for several years in secondary schools. No formal mechanism for reporting on schools existed because the inspectoral system had been abolished, leaving an accountability vacuum. Inspectors were replaced by a system of senior education officers, attached to regional offices, who were available for advice to schools, and to serve on the assessment panels of teachers seeking advancement. However, the Minister retained the prerogative of sending in a team of evaluators if it became known that a school's performance was doubtful.

Further, the school council, once established in the new format, had the option of selecting the new Principal and Deputy Principal when the positions became vacant. This latter aspect of policy was implemented in 1985, first in post primary schools, then almost immediately in larger primary schools. Some primary schools chose the option of having their principal centrally appointed using the former seniority mechanisms.

Implementation Mechanisms

Organizational Restructure

1. Office of Director General. The appointment of a new Director-General in 1973 provided an opportunity for some

rethinking and revamping of management at the senior level. Thus an Office of the Director General was created, comprising the Director-General, a Deputy Director-General and four Assistant Directors-General in the functional areas of Personnel, Finance, Curriculum and Building. The duties of the latter were to coordinate and rationalize the similar functions which were undertaken within each of the five operating directorates. The addition of a directorate of planning was also agreed.

2. Private Consultants' Report: Restructuring Commences.

Following regionalization of the state completed in 1974, and the subsequent efforts to implement procedures, it was realized that a regional structure which cut horizontally across the existing vertical operating divisions, i.e. Primary, Secondary, Technical, Special Education and Teacher Education, was virtually inoperable, and certainly inefficient. The government of the day engaged a private consultancy firm to make recommendations for a complete restructure of the system based on its decentralization and devolution policies in a "White Paper on the Restructuring of the Education System" (December, 1980). The "PA Report", as it became known, was handed down in September 1981. Its thrust was for structural change, and the consequent redefinition of roles and responsibilities.

Implementation commenced beginning with a spill of all senior positions at Inspector level and above. The inspectoral system was abolished. Incumbents continued to act in their positions until these became redundant.

The White Paper also recognized that the intent of the 1975 School Councils Act was being frustrated in that council members were being restricted in the exercise of the powers conferred on them. Changes in the regulations were therefore proposed to ensure that schooling became a cooperative venture among professional educators and members of the school community.

3. Government Changes: Restructure Revised. The phased filling of newly created positions was well underway in 1982 using appointment mechanisms which included interview and recommendation by representative panels, when a change of government occurred. The new Minister of Education halted the proceedings in order to review the restructuring proposals. After the new government's decentralization policy was spelled out, and with further modifications, the revised structure continued to be implemented. Ultimately this structure was found to have imperfections with the transfer of operational functions to the regions being partial and incomplete. The centre was continuing to maintain a direct involvement in the administration and management of schools and the school system. In many instances the regions were but an

intervening level of authority between schools and the centre. There was duplication and division of functions at central and regional levels.

4. Further Revision by Ministry Structures Project Team. In 1985 a new Minister of Education therefore ordered a further review by a Ministry Structures Project Team which produced a report recommending a new basis for the organizational structure around the concept of corporate management. Thus the Schools Division structure was to consist of two tiers -- a unified state office, and schools.

The elements within the Schools Division of the new State Office of Education were to be the Chief General Manager, the General Managers of the eight regions (formerly 12), and five branches. The heads of each of these elements were to comprise the Corporate Management Group, and were differentiated in terms of role rather than status. The corporate management group would have the responsibility of welding the branches and regions into a single body which would guide and support schools in ways that would realize government education policy. It would develop and implement a corporate plan for the Schools Division. This plan would provide a basis for the ongoing review and evaluation of all aspects of the Schools Division's performance.

The eight regions and the Personnel and Industrial

Relations Operations Branch (PIROB) were to be primarily concerned with the administration and management of the school system. The remaining four branches, Education Policy and Planning (EPPB), Resource Management, School Programs, and School Improvement (SIB) were to have no major responsibility for operational matters. Their tasks were to be to develop policy advice and options, to monitor and review the implementation of policy, to facilitate state-wide coordination, and to represent the Schools Division in negotiations with government agencies and other organizations.

The Chief General Manager as head of the new schools' administration was to be advised by the other general managers. He/she was to have the task, subject to the Minister, of determining Schools Division priorities and policies, and coordinating the implementation of policy across the state.

Within the new two-tiered structure the key operational line managers were to be the general managers with operational responsibilities, and the principals and head teachers of schools, the latter being accountable to the general manager of the region for the following matters:

a. the educational leadership of the school;

b. the effective and efficient management of the school;

c. the promotion and support of participative processes

which facilitate the work of the school council; and

d. the implementation of school council decisions.

5. Fine Tuning by the New Minister. A change of Minister in October, 1988 led to the abolition of corporate management arrangements, and the establishment of an Office of Schools' Administration. Participative decision making approaches were reinforced, two of the central branches (EPPB and SIB) were abolished, and the Resource Management Branch and PIROB were amalgamated.

Representative Bodies

Representative bodies have been established at three levels in the system as part of the participative process. These are School Councils, Regional Boards of Education and a State Board of Education, the latter two since 1982. Each has undergone evolutionary changes in its functions as the general philosophy of decentralization has unfolded and become modified.

1. School Councils have become an important factor in the decentralization process, being the principal means of relating each school to its community. The school council provides the primary means of involving parents, community members, teachers, students and the principal in participative decision-making processes. The aim is to ensure that the operations of the school are responsive to the needs and aspirations of the community.

School councils have settled down as statutory

bodies with defined responsibilities for the determination of school policy, the management of finance and facilities, the employment of ancilliary staff, promoting school-community relationships, the selection of the principal and deputy principal, and other areas of school operations. A school council is accountable to the Minister for its overall performance, within statewide policy guidelines, for financial management, and for carrying out its statutory responsibilities. It is also accountable to the school community through the election process.

2. A State Board of Education, initially comprising a Chairman, two full-time members and eleven part-time members was appointed by the Minister. Membership was drawn from various groups with a legitimate concern for the future of primary and post-primary education in Victoria. A continuing function of the Board was to assess the needs of all schools, to indicate where needs are not being met, and to recommend changes. The Board was conceived as a second source of advice to the Minister, complementing the advice traditionally provided by the senior civil servant. It provides advice that is agreed by the various groups within the Victorian education community. While the structure of the Board has remained unchanged the personnel and sub-committee structures have changed over time.

3. Regional Boards of Education have been established in each region with a key role in the development of regional plans for the delivery of resources and services to schools. In line with other developmental changes in the structure, regional boards too have evolved. Currently the board comprises elected representatives and the general manager of the region as a voting member. The boards are responsible for advising, within government policies, on priorities for the delivery of support services, including those previously provided by the central office. General managers consult with regional boards on resource priorities and allocations, and inform the boards of management decisons. The needs of each board are serviced by an administrative secretary together with other support staff.

School Improvement Plan

In 1983 the Minister of Education outlined the details of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) which reflected two principles: the cooperative nature of educational policy determination at school level, and the responsibility of the education system to provide resources and services to schools to meet their identified needs.

The aims of the SIP are to assist schools to reflect on their total practice, and to develop in ways that improve the learning experiences of all students; to encourage and support collaborative practices between parents, students and teachers

in schools, between schools, and the rest of the system; and to encourage and support a cyclical process of school evaluation, planning, implementation and re-evaluation.

The SIP is one way of determining needs as a cooperative task for the whole school community. It is directed towards meeting the needs of students as expressed by the whole school community. It aims to encourage schools to engage in the cyclical process of evaluation, planning, implementation and on-going evaluation in order to improve the schooling provided. It assists them to build a plan for school improvement based on their evaluation. Some resources were available to assist, and over a period of six years since the SIP's inception all government schools should have received some financial support to help them build and implement their plan.

Schools may decide to join the SIP formally in order to receive the benefits. Schools accepted into the plan must demonstrate that there is a commitment to the whole school community which includes principals, teachers, parents and students where appropriate. For inclusion in the SIP and hence be in receipt of support, a school must demonstrate the significance of the issues chosen to the school as a whole; indicate its desire to use outside personnel in preplanning and evaluation; state its willingness to seek resources from other areas; and clarify the planned use of any funds provided by the SIP, or any other funds to be used. Schools are free to undertake processes of review and improvement without involvement

in the SIP.

Program Budgeting

A mechanism for planning and accountability is being gradually, but positively introduced across the state using intensive workshop procedures. It is a cyclical process, termed program budgeting, which provides a comprehensive approach to school management, integrating philosophy, objectives, policy making, planning, budgeting and evaluation.

School Support Centres

With the elimination of the inspectoral system a vacuum was created in the matter of educational support for, and advice to schools. The replacement mechanism of senior education officers did not function as effectively as planned because many of the new incumbents were former inspectors, and most of the important complementary support personnel remained centrally located or controlled. In line with the decentralizing process, school support centres have been formally established since 1988 in strategic geographic locations throughout the state. The manager of the centre is reponsible to the general manager of the region. Each centre is the agency for the provision of curriculum, student, school council and other support services. It is staffed according to the needs and size of each region. For example four of the eight regions have interpreters, five have multi-cultural education officers (one of which has eleven, and

centres has been established.

A Ministry of Education

During the course of the last ten years efforts have been made to establish an administrative mechanism for the coordination of Ministry-wide operations. Hitherto the ministerial portfolio, known as the Department of Education, comprised the education department and several statutory authorities, such as the Teacher Registration Board, the Appeals Board, the Post Secondary Education Board, the Technical and Further Education Board, and the Institute of Educational Administration, to name some. In the late 1970's a Coordinator General was appointed to coordinate the various sections of the Minister's portfolio. However, the office was never developed and on the retirement of the appointee the position lapsed. Subsequently, in 1986, a Chief Executive together with appropriate senior staff was appointed to the organization which became known formally as the Ministry of Education, rather than the Department of Education. The Chief Executive is responsible to the Minister on a range of matters related to the functioning of the Ministry and for coordination of all statutory bodies within the portfolio.

Other Developments

Other developments which have been extremely influential in the growth and implementation of the participatory processes which underpin decentralization include the strength gained by

the teacher unions, and the state-wide parent/school council organizations associated with the schools. These organizations have gained full recognition, with their executives being consulted when appropriate, and by being represented on all committees and boards associated with decentralized procedures.

In the case of the teacher unions the terms and conditions of employment are negotiated annually, and include such matters as participation in the administration of schools through formal Administrative Committees established in every school. The size of the committee is dependent upon the number of teachers or the staff. Where a school's administrative committee is very active a principal's work can be either facilitated or frustrated, depending on the relationship developed with the committee. Among the matters upon which these committees should be consulted are allocation and administration of planning time, class sizes, playground duty, regularity of staff meetings and class allocation.

The parent perspective, representative of the government school system, continued to be forcefully placed before the government. As an example, in 1987 the Victorian Federation of State Schools Parents Clubs took the unprecedented step of serving a log of claims on the state government which included such themes as: high quality education must be available to all children; parents must be equal partners in all educational decision making; students have a right to participate in decisions about their own education; and the provision of quality

education depends largely on the quality of teachers.

CONCLUSION

The case study highlights some of the major developments and influences which affected the decentralization process as it gained momentum in the State of Victoria following the government's initial policy decision in 1971 to explore the potential of regionalization as the mechanism for having administrative decisions made closer to their point of implementation.

From a tentative beginning and confused processes, full devolution has almost been achieved. The schools are fully autonomous units with full decision making and management authority in certain matters. They must still function within statewide policy guidelines and accept centralized control of levels of staffing, salary structures, promotion and transfer procedures for teachers, and other controls negotiated as part of the terms and conditions agreement with teacher unions. Operating funds are provided on a per capita basis, but large scale spending requirements e.g. salaries, major building, are centrally controlled.

Additionally and importantly, community participation in significant areas of decision making related to the operations of schools has been enshrined in legislation.

A two-tiered structure has emerged for the Schools Division -- a unified administration comprising centre and regional

offices, and schools, each with roles and responsibilities clearly established. The former Department of Education is now the Ministry of Education with a Chief Executive as the senior civil servant, and a Chief General Manager as the chief administrator of the school's administration.

The case study illustrates the tortuous nature of processes leading along the path of decentralization when contending forces strive to influence the direction of the momentum which gradually builds. A major tension developed between political will and administrative will, the former being frustrated by elements in the latter whose attitude has been conditioned to accept and function in a centralistic mode. Ultimately in the case described, there was considerable direct Ministerial involvement in the administrative processes of the system.

Inherent in the case study are the elements of human tragedy which stem from the inability of some senior officers to adapt, or to gain posts in the new structure, either because they have not met all of the criteria used by the diversity of members of the selection panels, or they chose not to make applications for positions.

The various attempts to "get it right" are noteworthy. The enormity of the structural change necessary when decentralization is embarked upon was not fully realized. A change of government and several changes of Ministers of Education had a considerable effect on the course of decentralization. In the process

from the ranks of the teacher unions and parent associations to be appointed to key posts in advance of career education officers.

Idealism was tempered by realism. The inspectoral system was abolished as being inimical to the professional status of teachers. Schools have become responsible through their councils to the community, establishing their own evaluation procedures, with program budgeting, being gradually, but positively introduced across the state. Finally the need for professional support in reasonable proximity to schools was recognized with the establishment of School Support Centres.

Although mentioned in passing in the case study as being important, in-service education and training was a somewhat neglected component of the decentralizing processes. New attitudes and roles must be learned by many persons throughout the system. For example, parents involved in the participatory processes do not possess 'expert' knowledge about schools, or have access to necessary information. They do not have confidence in meeting procedures. Principals without preliminary training or preparation were directed to run their own schools in accordance with new policies which were neither fully articulated, nor understood. The case study demonstrates how difficult it is to mandate major new approaches without fulsome information being given to, and preparation provided for those who will be affected.

Decentralization was an imposed strategy. There was no

strongly articulated majority sentiment for sweeping devolution. The momentum generated throughout the 80s resulted mainly from the efforts of Labor Party intellectuals and state level teacher unions and parent organizations. A great deal of confusion and anxiety developed because the implementation process had to undergo substantial modification. Elements of the process then took place with considerable haste.

Notwithstanding the implementation difficulties of decentralized administrative processes, education continued to be provided in schools. Principals could no longer act with the certainty of the past, and many teachers became engaged in various extra-curricula activities. These same teachers maintained commitment to students as their prime responsibility.

The restructured Office of Schools Administration (formerly the Department of Education) of the Ministry of Education is now settling down. Apart from the practical realities of day-to-day operations, there has been an enormous effect on the content and discourse about educational administration and school-community relations. Thinking has been changed, and as time passes substantial changes will occur in the practice of administration and participation.